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SONGS OF MEMORY AND HOPE

HENRY NEWBOLT

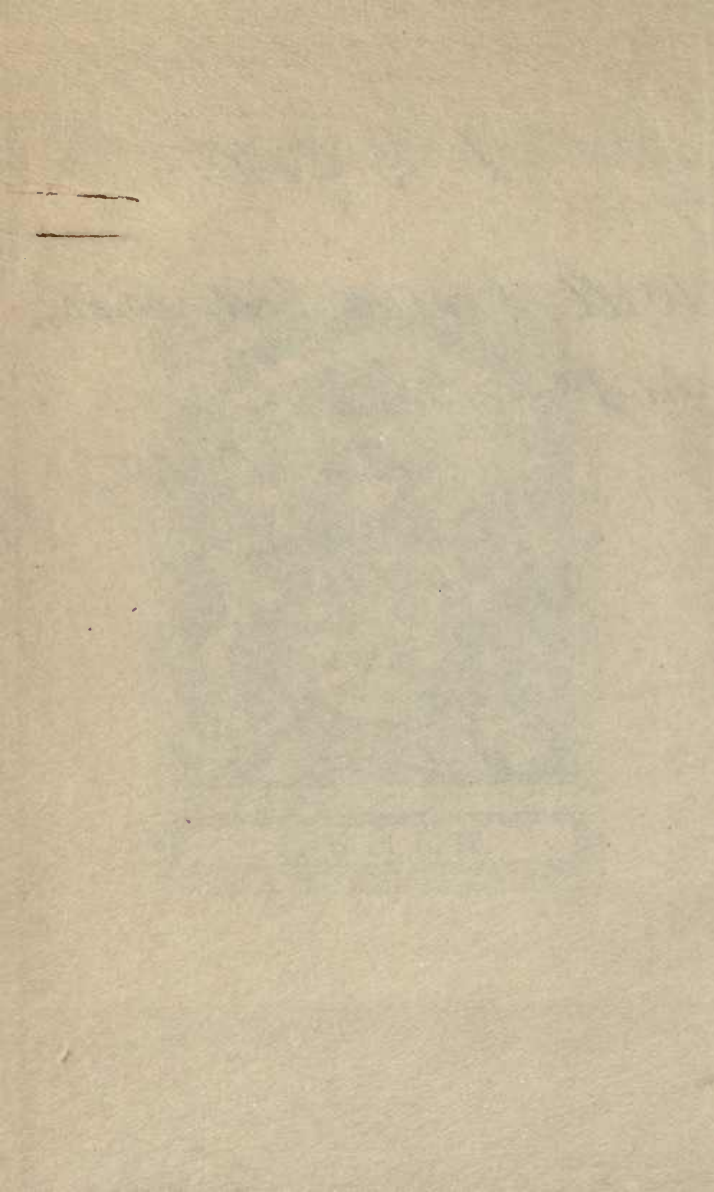
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L. B. Gibbs

With love & best-wishes
for Xmas '09

from Antony



SONGS OF MEMORY AND HOPE

BY HENRY NEWBOLT

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1909

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To
LAURENCE BINYON

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SACRAMENTUM SUPREMUM

MUDKEN, MARCH 6, 1905

YE that with me have fought and failed
and fought

To the last desperate trench of battle's
crest,

Not yet to sleep, not yet ; our work is
nought ;

On that last trench the fate of all may
rest.

Draw near, my friends ; and let your
thoughts be high ;

Great hearts are glad when it is time
to give ;

Life is no life to him that dares not die,
And death no death to him that dares
to live.

8 SACRAMENTUM SUPREMUM

Draw near together ; none be last or
first ;

We are no longer names, but one de-
sire ;

With the same burning of the soul we
thirst,

And the same wine to-night shall quench
our fire.

Drink ! to our fathers who begot us men,
To the dead voices that are never
dumb ;

Then to the land of all our loves, and
then

To the long parting, and the age to
come.

ODE FOR TRAFALGAR DAY, 1905

"Partial firing continued until 4.30, when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B., and Commander-in-Chief, he then died of his wound."—Log of the *Victory*, October 21, 1805.

ENGLAND! to-day let fire be in thine
eyes

And in thy heart the throb of leaping
guns ;

Crown in thy streets the deed that never
dies,

And tell their fathers' fame to all thy
sons !

Behold ! behold ! on that unchanging sea
Where day behind Trafalgar rises pale,
How dread the storm to be

10 ODE FOR TRAFALGAR DAY

Drifts up with ominous breath
Cloud after towering cloud of billowy sail
Full charged with thunder and the
bolts of death.

Yet when the noon is past, and thy delight,
More delicate for these good hundred
years,
Has drunk the splendour and the sound
of fight
And the sweet sting of long-since
vanished fears,
Then, England, come thou down with
sterner lips
From the bright world of thy substantial
power,
Forget thy seas, thy ships,
And that wide echoing dome
To watch the soul of man in his dark hour
Redeeming yet his dear lost land of
home.

ODE FOR TRAFALGAR DAY 11

What place is this? What under-world
of pain

All shadow-barred with glare of swing-
ing fires?

What writhing phantoms of the newly slain?

What cries? What thirst consuming all
desires?

This is the field of battle: not for life,
Not for the deeper life that dwells in
love,

Not for the savour of strife

Or the far call of fame,

Not for all these the fight: all these
above

The soul of this man cherished Duty's
name.

His steadfast hope from self has turned
away,

For the Cause only must he still
contend:

12 ODE FOR TRAFALGAR DAY

“How goes the day with us? How goes
the day?”

He craves not victory, but to make an
end.

Therefore not yet thine hour, O Death:
but when

The weapons forged against his country's
peace

Lie broken round him—then

Give him the kiss supreme;

Then let the tumult of his warfare
cease

And the last dawn dispel his anguished
dream.

THE HUNDREDTH YEAR

" Drake, and Blake, and Nelson's mighty name."

THE stars were faint in heaven
That saw the Old Year die ;
The dream-white mist of Devon
Shut in the seaward sky :
Before the dawn's unveiling
I heard three voices hailing,
I saw three ships come sailing
With lanterns gleaming high.

The first he cried defiance—
A full-mouthed voice and bold—
" On God be our reliance,
Our hope the Spaniard's gold !
With a still, stern ambuscado,
With a roaring escalado,
We'll sack their Eldorado
And storm their dungeon hold !"

14 THE HUNDREDTH YEAR

Then slowly spake the second—
A great sad voice and deep—
“When all your gold is reckoned,
There is but this to keep :
To stay the foe from fooling,
To learn the heathen schooling,
To live and die sea-ruling,
And home at last to sleep.”

But the third matched in beauty
The dawn that flushed afar ;
“O sons of England, Duty
Is England's morning star :
Then Fame's eternal splendour
Be theirs who well defend her,
And theirs who fain would bend her
The night of Trafalgar !”

THE FINAL MYSTERY

This myth, of Egyptian origin, formed part of the instruction given to those initiated in the Orphic mysteries, and written versions of it were buried with the dead.

HEAR now, O Soul, the last command
of all—

When thou hast left thine every mortal
mark,

And by the road that lies beyond recall
Won through the desert of the Burning
Dark,

Thou shalt behold within a garden bright
A well, beside a cypress ivory-white.

Still is that well, and in its waters cool
White, white and windless, sleeps that
cypress tree :

Who drinks but once from out her
shadowy pool

Shall thirst no more to all eternity.

16 THE FINAL MYSTERY

Forgetting all, by all forgotten clean,
His soul shall be with that which hath
not been.

But thou, though thou be trembling with
thy dread,
And parched with thy desire more fierce
than flame,
Think on the stream wherefrom thy life
was fed,
And that diviner fountain whence it
came.
Turn thee and cry—behold, it is not
far—
Unto the hills where living waters are.

“Lord, though I lived on earth, the child
of earth,
Yet was I fathered by the starry sky:
Thou knowest I came not of the shadows’
birth,

Let me not die the death that shadows
die.

Give me to drink of the sweet spring
that leaps

From Memory's fount, wherein no cypress
sleeps."

Then shalt thou drink, O Soul, and there-
with slake

The immortal longing of thy mortal
thirst ;

So of thy Father's life shalt thou par-
take,

And be for ever that thou wert at first.

Lost in remembered loves, yet thou more
thou

With them shalt reign in never-ending
Now.

IL SANTO

ALAS! alas! what impious hands are
these?

They have cut down my dark mysterious
trees,

Defied the brooding spell

That sealed my sacred well,

Broken my fathers' fixed and ancient bars,

And on the mouldering shade

Wherein my dead were laid

Let in the cold clear aspect of the stars.

Slumber hath held the grove for years
untold :

Is there no reverence for a peace so old?

Is there no seemly awe

For bronze-engraven law,

For dust beatified and saintly name ?
When they shall see the shrine
Princes have held divine,
Will they not bow before the eternal flame ?

Vain ! vain ! the wind of heaven for ages
long

Hath whispered manhood, " Let thine arm
be strong !

Hew down and fling away
The growth that veils decay,
Shatter the shrine that chokes the living
spring.

Scorn hatred, scorn regret,
Dig deep and deeper yet,
Leave not the quest for word of saint or
king.

" Dig deeper yet ! though the world brand
thee now,
The faithful labour of an impious brow

May for thy race redeem
The source of that lost stream
Once given the thirst of all the earth to
 slake.

Nay, thou too ere the end
Thy weary knee mayst bend
And in thy trembling hands that water
 take."

DEVON

DEEP-WOODED combes, clear-mounded
hills of morn,

Red sunset tides against a red sea-wall,
High lonely barrows where the curlews
call,

Far moors that echo to the ringing horn,—
Devon! thou spirit of all these beauties
born,

All these are thine, but thou art more
than all :

Speech can but tell thy name, praise
can but fall

Beneath the cold white sea-mist of thy
scorn.

Yet, yet, O noble land, forbid us not
Even now to join our faint memorial
chime
To the fierce chant wherewith their hearts
were hot
Who took the tide in thy Imperial
prime ;
Whose glory's thine till Glory sleeps for-
got
With her ancestral phantoms, Pride
and Time.

TO EDWARD FITZGERALD

MARCH 31, 1909

'TIS a sad fate

To watch the world fighting
All that is most fair

Ruthlessly blighting,
Blighting, ah ! blighting.

When such a thought cometh

Let us not pine,
But gather old friends

Round the red wine—

Oh ! pour the red wine !

And there we'll talk

And warm our wits
With Eastern fallacies

Out of old Fitz !

British old Fitz !

See him, half statesman—

Philosopher too—

Half ancient mariner

In baggy blue—

Such baggy blue!

Whimsical, wistful,

Haughty, forsooth:

Indolent always, yet

Ardent in truth,

But indolent, indolent!

There at the table

With us sits he,

Charming us subtly

To reverie,

Magic reverie.

“How sweet is summer’s breath,

How sure and swift is death;

Nought wise on earth, save

What the wine whispereth,

Dreamily whispereth.

“At Naishapúr beneath the sun,
Or here in misty Babylon,
Drink ! for the rose leaves while you linger
Are falling, ever falling, one by one.”

Ah ! poet's soul, once more with us
conspire

To grasp this sorry scheme of things
entire,

Once more with us to-night, old Fitz, once
more

Remould it nearer to the heart's desire !

THE MOSSROSE

WALKING to-day in your garden, O gracious lady,

Little you thought as you turned in that alley remote and shady,

And gave me a rose and asked if I knew its savour—

The old-world scent of the mossrose, flower of a bygone favour—

Little you thought as you waited the word of appraisement,

Laughing at first and then amazed at my amazement,

That the rose you gave was a gift
already cherished,

And the garden whence you plucked it
a garden long perished.

But I—I saw that garden, with its one
treasure

The tiny mossrose, tiny even by child-
hood's measure,

And the long morning shadow of the
dusty laurel,

And a boy and a girl beneath it, flushed
with a childish quarrel.

She wept for her one little bud : but he,
outreaching

The hand of brotherly right, would take
it for all her beseeching :

And she flung her arms about him, and
gave like a sister,

And laughed at her own tears, and wept
again when he kissed her.

So the rose is mine long since, and
whenever I find it

And drink again the sharp sweet scent
of the moss behind it,

I remember the tears of a child, and her
love and her laughter,

And the morning shadows of youth and
the night that fell thereafter.

AVE, SOROR

I LEFT behind the ways of care,
The crowded hurrying hours,
I breathed again the woodland air,
I plucked the woodland flowers:

Bluebells as yet but half awake,
Primroses pale and cool,
Anemones like stars that shake
In a green twilight pool—

On these still lay the enchanted shade,
The magic April sun ;
With my own child a child I strayed
And thought the years were one.

As through the copse she went and came
My senses lost their truth ;
I called her by the dear dead name
That sweetened all my youth.

TO A RIVER IN THE SOUTH

CALL me no more, O gentle stream,
To wander through thy sunny dream,
No more to lean at twilight cool
Above thy weir and glimmering pool.

Surely I know thy hoary dawns,
The silver crisp on all thy lawns,
The softly swirling undersong
That rocks thy reeds the winter long.

Surely I know the joys that ring
Through the green deeps of leafy spring ;
I know the elfin cups and domes
That are their small and secret homes.

Yet is the light for ever lost
That daily once thy meadows crossed,

TO A RIVER IN THE SOUTH 31

The voice no more by thee is heard
That matched the song of stream and
bird.

Call me no more!—thy waters roll
Here, in the world that is my soul,
And here, though Earth be drowned in
night,
Old love shall dwell with old delight.

ON THE DEATH OF A NOBLE LADY

TIME, when thou shalt bring again
Pallas from the Trojan plain,
Portia from the Roman's hall,
Brynhild from the fiery wall,
Eleanor, whose fearless breath
Drew the venom'd fangs of Death,
And Philippa doubly brave
Or to conquer or to save—

When thou shalt on one bestow
All their grace and all their glow,
All their strength and all their state,
All their passion pure and great,
Some far age may honour then
Such another queen of men.

MIDWAY

TURN back, my Soul, no longer set
Thy peace upon the years to come:
Turn back, the land of thy regret
Holds nothing doubtful, nothing dumb.

There are the voices, there the scenes
That make thy life in living truth
A tale of heroes and of queens,
Fairer than all the hopes of youth.

AD MATREM DOLOROSAM

THINK not thy little fountain's rain
That in the sunlight rose and flashed,
From the bright sky has fallen again,
To cold and shadowy silence dashed.
The Joy that in her radiance leapt
From everlasting hath not slept.

The hand that to thy hand was dear,
The untroubled eyes that mirrored
thine,
The voice that gave thy soul to hear
A whisper of the Love Divine—
What though the gold was mixed with
dust?
The gold is thine and cannot rust.

Nor fear, because thy darling's heart
No longer beats with mortal life,
That she has missed the ennobling part
Of human growth and human strife.
Only she has the eternal peace
Wherein to reap the soul's increase.

VRAIS AMANTS

(FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

“ TIME mocks thy opening music with a
close ;

What now he gives long since he gave
away.

Thou deemst thy sun hath risen, but ere
it rose

It was eclipsed, and dusk shall be thy day.”

Yet has the Dawn gone up : in loveliest
light

She walks high heaven beyond the
shadow there :

Whom I too veiled from all men's envious
sight

With inward eyes adore and silent prayer.

THE SANGREAL

ONCE, when beside me in that sacred
place

I saw my lady lift her lovely head,
And saw the Chalice gleam above her
face

And her dear lips with life immortal
red,

Then, born again beyond the mist of
years,

I knelt in Heaven, and drank the wine
of tears.

SIR HUGH THE PALMER

I

He kneeled among a waste of sands
Before the Mother-Maid,
But on the far green forest-lands
His steadfast eyes were stayed,
And like a knight of stone his hands
He straightened while he prayed.

“Lady, beyond all women fair,
Beyond all saints benign,
Whose living heart through life I bear
In mystery divine,
Hear thou and grant me this my prayer,
Or grant no prayer of mine.

“The fever of my spirit’s pain
 Heal thou with heavenly scorn;
The dust that but of dust is fain
 Leave thou in dust forlorn;
Yea! bury love to rise again
 Meet for eternal morn.

“So by thy grace my inward eyes
 Thy beauty still shall see,
And while our life in shadow lies
 High dawn shall image thee,
Till with thy soul in Paradise
 Thy servant’s soul shall be.”

Before the immortal Mother-Maid
 Low on the sands he kneeled;
But even while the words he prayed
 His lips to patience sealed,
Joy in his eyes a radiance made
 Like stars in dusk revealed.

II

It was an idle company—

Ladies and lordings fine—

Idly under the wild-wood tree

Their laughter ran like wine.

Yet as they laughed a voice they
heard—

A voice where none was seen,—

Singing blithe as a hidden bird

Among the forest green.

“Mark ye, mark ye, a lonely knight

Riding the green forest :

Pard! for one so poorly dight

He lifts a haughty crest!

Azure and white is all his wear,

He hath no gold, I trow!

Wanderer, thou in the wild-wood there,

Tell us why sing ye so!”

“ Noble ladies and lordings gay,
God have you all in guard :
Since ye are pleased with me to play,
My riddle it is not hard.
I sing because, of all that ride,
I am the least of worth :
I sing because, to match my pride,
Never was pride on earth.

“ But, an ye ask what that may mean,
Thus do I answer then :
I bear with me the heart of a Queen—
I that am least of men :—
I bear her heart till the end of all,
Yea ! by her own command
I bear the heart of a Queen royal
Unto the Holy Land.”

Humbly there his crest he bent,—
Azure it waved and white,—
Haughtily there he turned and went
Singing, out of their sight.

42 SIR HUGH THE PALMER

Long, long but his voice they heard,—

A voice where none was seen,—

Singing blithe as a hidden bird,

Among the forest green.

THE PRESENTATION

WHEN in the womb of Time our souls'
own son

Dear Love lay sleeping till his natal hour,
Long months I knew not that sweet life
begun,

Too dimly treasuring thy touch of power ;
And wandering all those days
By far-off ways,

Forgot immortal seed must have immortal
flower.

Only, beloved, since my beloved thou art
I do remember, now that memory's vain,
How twice or thrice beneath my beating
heart

Life quickened suddenly with proudest
pain.

Then dreamed I Love's increase,
Yet held my peace
Till I might render thee thy own great
gift again.

For as with bodies, so with souls it is,
The greater gives, the lesser doth conceive :

That thou hast fathered Love, I tell thee
this,

And by my pangs beseech thee to believe.

Look on his hope divine—

Thy hope and mine—

Pity his outstretched hands, tenderly him
receive !

AMORE ALTIERO

SINCE thou and I have wandered from
the highway

And found with hearts reborn
This swift and unimaginable byway
Unto the hills of morn,
Shall not our love disdain the unworthy
uses

Of the old time outworn?

I'll not entreat thy half-unwilling graces
With humbly folded palms,
Nor seek to shake thy proud defended
places

With noise of vague alarms,
Nor ask against my fortune's grim pur-
suing

The refuge of thy arms.

Thou'lt not withhold for pleasure vain
and cruel

That which has long been mine,
Nor overheap with briefly burning fuel
A fire of flame divine,
Nor yield the key for life's profaner voices
To brawl within the shrine.

But thou shalt tell me of thy queenly
pleasure

All that I must fulfil,
And I'll receive from out my royal treasure
What golden gifts I will,
So that two realms supreme and un-
disputed
Shall be one kingdom still.

And our high hearts shall praise the beauty
hidden
In starry-minded scorn

By the same Lord who hath his servants
bidden

To seek with eyes new-born
This swift and unimaginable byway
Unto the hills of morn.

LOVE AND GRIEF

ONE day, when Love and Summer both
were young,
Love in a garden found my lady weep-
ing;
Whereat, when he to kiss her would have
sprung,
I stayed his childish leaping.

“Forbear,” said I, “she is not thine to-
day;
Subdue thyself in silence to await her;
If thou dare call her from Death’s side
away
Thou art no Love, but traitor.

Yet did he run, and she his kiss
received,

"She is twice mine," he cried, "since
she is troubled :

I knew but half, and now I see her
grieved

My part in her is doubled."

AGAINST OBLIVION

CITIES drowned in olden time
Keep, they say, a magic chime
Rolling up from far below
When the moon-led waters flow.

So within me, ocean deep,
Lies a sunken world asleep.
Lest its bells forget to ring,
Memory ! set the tide a-swing

THE INHERITANCE

While I within her secret garden walked,
The flowers, that in her presence must
be dumb,

With me, their fellow-servant, softly
talked,

Attending till the Flower of flowers
should come.

Then, since at Court I had arrived but
late,

I was by love made bold
To ask that of my lady's high estate
I might be told,

And glories of her blood, perpetuate
In histories old.

Then they, who know the chronicle of
Earth,

Spoke of her loveliness, that like a flame
Far-handed down from noble birth to
birth,

Gladdened the world for ages ere she
came.

"Yea, yea," they said, "from Summer's
royal sun

Comes that immortal line,
And was create not for this age alone
Nor wholly thine,
Being indeed a flower whose root is one
With Life Divine.

"To the sweet buds that of herself are
part

Already she this portion hath be-
queathed,
As, not less surely, into thy proud heart
Her nobleness, O poet, she hath breathed,

That her inheritance by them and thee
The world may keep away,
When the still sunlight of her eyes
shall be
Lost to the day,
And even the fragrance of her memory
Fading away."

EGERIA'S SILENCE

HER thought that, like a brook beside
the way,
Sang to my steps through all the
wandering year,
Has ceased from melody—O Love, allay
My sudden fear!

She cannot fail—the beauty of that brow
Could never flower above a desert
heart—
Somewhere beneath, the well-spring even
now
Lives, though apart.

Some day, when winter has renewed her
fount

With cold, white-folded snows and quiet
rain,

O Love, O Love, her stream again will
mount

And sing again !

THE PEDLAR'S SONG

I TRAMPED among the townward throng
A sultry summer's morn :
They mocked me loud, they mocked me
long,
They laughed my pack to scorn.
But a likely pedlar holds his peace
Until the reckoning's told :—
Merrily I to market went, tho' songs were
all my gold.

At weary noon I left the town,
I left the highway straight,
I climbed the silent, sunlit down
And stood by a castle gate.
Never yet was a house too high
When the pedlar's heart was bold :—
Merrily I to market went, tho' songs were
all my gold.

A lady leaned from her window there

And asked my wares to see ;

Her voice made rich the summer air,

Richer my soul in me.

She gave me only four little words,

Words of a language old :—

Merrily I from market came, for all my
songs were sold.

BENEDICK'S SONG

Though I see within thine eyes
Sudden frown of cloudy skies,
Yet I bid them "merry morn"
For they tell me Love is born.
So ha-há! with há-ha-há!
For they tell me Love is born.

Storms of mocking from thy lips
Lash me still like airy whips;
But to-day thy scorn I scorn
For I know that Love is born.
So ha-há! with há-ha-há!
For I know that Love is born.

O the hail that rattles fierce
Through my hodden cloak to pierce!
What care I if rags be torn?
Love and I are beggars born!
 So ha-há! with há-ha-há!
 Love and I are beggars born.

FOND COUNSEL

O YOUTH, beside thy silver-springing
fountain,

In sight and hearing of thy father's cot,
These and the morning woods, the lonely
mountain,

These are thy peace, although thou know'st
it not.

Wander not yet where noon's unpitying
glare

Beats down the toilers in the city bare ;
Forsake not yet, not yet, the homely plot,

O Youth, beside thy silver-springing
fountain.

YOUTH

HIS song of dawn outsoars the joyful
bird,

Swift on the weary road his footfall
comes ;

The dusty air that by his stride is stirred
Beats with a buoyant march of fairy
drums.

“Awake, O Earth ! thine ancient slumber
break ;

To the new day, O slumbrous Earth,
awake !”

Yet long ago that merry march began,
His feet are older than the path they
tread ;

His music is the morning-song of man,
His stride the stride of all the valiant
dead ;

His youngest hopes are memories, and
his eyes
Deep with the old, old dream that never
dies.

THE WANDERER

To Youth there comes a whisper out of
the west :

“O loiterer, hasten where there waits
for thee

A life to build, a love therein to nest,
And a man's work, serving the age to
be.”

Peace, peace awhile ! Before his tireless
feet

Hill beyond hill the road in sunlight
goes ;

He breathes the breath of morning, clear
and sweet,

And his eyes love the high eternal
snows.

THE ADVENTURERS

OVER the downs in sunlight clear
Forth we went in the spring of the year :
Plunder of April's gold we sought,
Little of April's anger thought.

Caught in a copse without defence
Low we crouched to the rain-squall dense :
Sure, if misery man can vex,
There it beat on our bended necks.

Yet when again we wander on
Suddenly all that gloom is gone :
Under and over through the wood,
Life is astir, and life is good.

Violets purple, violets white,
Delicate windflowers dancing light,
Primrose, mercury, moscatel,
Shimmer in diamonds round the dell.

Squirrel is climbing swift and lithe,
Chiff-chaff whetting his airy scythe,
Woodpecker whirrs his rattling rap,
Ringdove flies with a sudden clap.

Rook is summoning rook to build,
Dunnock his beak with moss has filled,
Robin is bowing in coat-tails brown,
Tomtit chattering upside down.

Well is it seen that every one
Laughs at the rain and loves the sun ;
We too laughed with the wildwood crew,
Laughed till the sky once more was
blue.

Homeward over the downs we went
Soaked to the heart with sweet content ;
April's anger is swift to fall,
April's wonder is worth it all.

TO CLARE

(With a Volume of Stories from Froissart)

MY CLARE,—

These tales were told, you know,
In French, five hundred years ago,
By old Sir John, whose heart's delight
Was lady sweet and valiant knight.
A hundred years went by, and then
A great lord told the tales again,
When bluff King Hal desired his folk
To read them in the tongue they spoke.
Last, I myself among them took
What I loved best and made this book

Great, lesser, less—these writers three
Worked for the days they could not see,
And certès, in their work they knew
Nothing at all, dear child, of you.
Yet is the book your own in truth,
Because 'tis made for noble youth,
And every word that's living there
Must die when Clares are no more Clare.

THE RETURN OF SUMMER: AN ECLOGUE

Scene : ASHDOWN FOREST IN MAY

Persons : H.—A POET ; C.—HIS DAUGHTER

H. Here then, if you insist, my daughter :
still,

I must confess that I preferred the
hill.

The warm scent of the pinewood
seemed to me

The first true breath of summer ; did
you see

The waxen hurt-bells with their
promised fruit

Already purple at the blossom's root,

THE RETURN OF SUMMER 69

And thick among the rusty bracken
strown

Sunburnt anemones long overblown?

Summer is come at last!

C. And that is why

Mine is a better place than yours to lie.

This dark old yew tree casts a fuller
shade

Than any pine; the stream is simply
made

For keeping bottles cool; and when
we've dined

I could just wade a bit while you . . .
reclined.

H. Empty the basket then, without more
words . . .

But I still wish we had not left the birds.

C. Father! you are perverse! Since
when, I beg,

Have forest birds been tethered by
the leg?

70 THE RETURN OF SUMMER

They're everywhere! What more can
you desire?

The cuckoo shouts as though he'd never
tire,

The nuthatch, knowing that of noise
you're fond,

Keeps chucking stones along a frozen
pond,

And busy gold-crest, somewhere out of
sight,

Works at his saw with all his tiny
might.

I do not count the ring-doves or the
rooks,

We hear so much about them in the
books

They're hardly real; but from where I
sit

I see two chaffinches, a long-tailed
tit,

A missel-thrush, a yaffle——

THE RETURN OF SUMMER 71

H. That will do :

I may have overlooked a bird or two.

Where are the biscuits? Are you
getting cramp

Down by the water there—it must
be damp?

C. I'm only watching till your bottle's
cool :

It lies so snug beneath this glassy
pool,

Like a sunk battleship ; and overhead
The water-boatmen get their daily
bread

By rowing all day long, and far below
Two little eels go winding, winding
slow . . .

Oh! there's a shark !

H. A what?

C. A miller's thumb.

Don't move, I'll tempt him with a
tiny crumb.

72 THE RETURN OF SUMMER

H. Bequick about it, please, and don't forget
I am at least as dry as he is wet.

C. Oh, very well then, here's your drink.

H. That's good !
I feel much better now.

C. I thought you would (*exit quietly*).

H. How beautiful the world is when it
breathes

The news of summer !—when the
bronzy sheathes

Still hang about the beech-leaf, and
the oaks

Are wearing still their dainty tasselled
cloaks,

While on the hillside every hawthorn
pale

Has taken now her balmy bridal veil,
And, down below, the drowsy mur-
muring stream

Lulls the warm noonday in an endless
dream.

THE RETURN OF SUMMER 73

O little brook, far more thou art to
me

Than all the pageantry of field and
tree :

Es singen wohl die Nixen—ah! 'tis
truth—

Tief unten ihren Reih'n—but only Youth
Can hear them joyfully, as once I lay
And heard them singing of the world's
highway,

Of wandering ended, and the maiden
found,

And golden bread by magic mill-wheel
ground.

Lost is the magic now, the wheel is
still,

And long ago the maiden left the mill :
Yet once a year, one day, when summer
dawns,

The old, old murmur haunts the river-
lawns,

74 THE RETURN OF SUMMER

The fairies wake, the fairy song is
sung,

And for an hour the wanderer's feet
are young (*he dozes*).

C. (*returning*) Father! I called you
twice.

H. I did not know :
Where have you been ?

C. Oh, down the stream.

H. Just so :

Well, *I* went *up*.

C. I wish you'd been with me.

H. When East is West, my daughter,
that may be.

DREAM-MARKET

A MASQUE PRESENTED AT WILTON HOUSE,
JULY 28, 1909

Scene. A LAWN IN THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE'S
ARCADIA

Enter FLORA, Lady of Summer, with her maidens, PHYLLIS and AMARYLLIS. She takes her seat upon a bank, playing with a basket of freshly gathered flowers, one of which she presently holds up in her hand.

FLORA. Ah! how I love a rose! But
come, my girls,
Here's for your task: to-day you,
Amaryllis,
Shall take the white, and, Phyllis, you
the red.

Hold out your kirtles for them. White,
red, white,
Red, red, and white again. . . .

Wonder you not
How the same sun can breed such different beauties?

[She divides all her roses between them.]
Well, take them all, and go—scatter
them wide
In gardens where men love me, and be
sure
Where even one flower falls, or one soft
petal,
Next year shall see a hundred.

[As they turn to go, enter LUCIA in hunting dress, with bow in hand and a hound by her side. FLORA rises to meet her, and recalls her maidens.]

Stay! attend me.

LUCIA. Greeting, fair ladies; you, I
think, must be

Daughters of this green Earth, and one
of you

The sweet Dame Flora.

FLORA. Your true servant, madam.
But if my memory be not newly withered
I have not known the pleasure. . . .

LUCIA. Yes, you have seen me—
At least, you might have seen me ; I am
Lucia,

Lady of Moonlight, and I often hunt
These downs of yours with all my nightly
pack

Of questing beams and velvet-footed
shadows.

FLORA. I fear at night. . . .

LUCIA. Oh, yes ! at night you are
sleeping !

And I by day am always rather faint ;
So we don't meet ; but sometimes your
good folk

Have torn my nets by raking in the water ;

And though their neighbours laughed
there are worse ways
Of spending time, and far worse things
to rake for
Than silver lights upon a crystal stream.
But come! My royal Sire, the Man in
the Moon—

He has been here?

FLORA. So many kings come here,
I can't be sure; I've heard the Man in
the Moon

Did once come down and ask his way
to Norwich.

But that was years ago—hundreds of
years—

It may not be the same—I do not
know

You royal father's age. . . .

LUCIA. His age? Oh surely!
He never *can* be more than one month
old.

FLORA. Yet he's your father !

LUCIA. Well, he is and is not ;
[*Proudly*] I am the daughter of a million
moons.

They month by month and year by
circling year,

From their celestial palace looking down
On your day-wearied Earth, have soothed
her sleep,

And rocked her tides, and made a magic
world

For all her lovers and her nightin-
gales.

You owe them much, my ancestors. No
doubt,

At times they suffered under clouds ; at
times

They were eclipsed ; yet in their brighter
hours

They were illustrious !

FLORA. And may I hope

Your present Sire, his present Serene
Highness,
Is in his brighter hours to-day ?

LUCIA.

Ah ! no.

Be sure he is not—else I had not left
My cool, sweet garden of unfading stars
For the rank meadows of this sun-worn
mould.

FLORA. What *is* your trouble, then ?

LUCIA.

Although my father
Has been but ten days reigning, he is sad
With all the sadness of a phantom realm,
And all the sorrows of ten thousand years.
We in our Moonland have no life like
yours,
No birth, no death : we live but in our
dreams :
And when they are grown old—these
mortal visions
Of an immortal sleep—we seem to lose
them.

They are too strong for us, too self-
sufficient

To live for us ; they go their ways and
leave us,

Like shadows grown substantial.

FLORA.

I have heard

Something on earth not unlike this com-
plaint ;

But can I help you ?

LUCIA.

Lady, if you cannot,

No one can help. In Moonland there is
famine,

We are losing all our dreams, and I come
hither

To buy a new one for my father's house.

FLORA. To buy a dream ?

LUCIA.

Some little darling dream

That will be always with us, night and
day,

Loving and teasing, sailing light of heart
Over our darkest deeps, reminding us

Of our lost childhood, playing our old
games,
Singing our old songs, asking our old
riddles,
Building our old hopes, and with our old
gusto
Rehearsing for us in one endless act
The world past and the world to be.

FLORA.

Oh! now

I see your meaning. Yes, I have indeed
Plenty of such sweet dreams: *we* call
them children.

They are *our* dreams too, and though they
are born of us,
Truly in them we live. But, dearest lady,
We do not sell them.

LUCIA. Do you mean you will not?
Not one? Could you not *lend* me one—
just one?

FLORA. Ah! but to lend what cannot
be returned

Is merely giving—who can bring again
Into the empty nest those winged years?
Still, there are children here well worth
your hopes,

And you shall venture : if there be among
them

One that your heart desires, and she consent,

Take her and welcome—for the will of
Love

Is the wind's will, and none may guess
his going.

LUCIA. O dearest Lady Flora !

FLORA. Stay ! they are here,
Mad as a dance of May-flies.

[The children run in dancing and singing.]

Shall we sit
And watch these children ?

Phyllis, bid them play,
And let them heed us no more than the
trees

That girdle this green lawn with whisper-
ing beauty.

*[The children play and sing at their games,
till at a convenient moment the LADY
FLORA holds up her hand.]*

FLORA. Now, Amaryllis, stay the rush-
ing stream,

The meadows for this time have drunk
enough.

[To LUCIA.] And you, what think you,
lady, of these maids?

Has their sweet foolish singing moved
your heart

To choose among them?

LUCIA. I have heard them gladly,
And if I could, would turn them all to
elves,

That if they cannot live with me, at least
I might look down when our great galleon
sails

Close over earth, and see them always here

Dancing upon the moonlit shores of night.

But how to choose!—and though they

are young and fair

Their every grace foretells the fatal change,

The swift short bloom of girlhood, like

a flower

Passing away, for ever passing away.

Have you not one with petals tenderer yet,

More deeply folded, further from the hour

When the bud dies into the mortal rose?

FLORA [*pointing*]. *There is my youngest*

blossom and my fairest,

But my most wilful too—you'll pluck her

not

Without some aid of magic.

LUCIA.

Time has been

When I have known even your forest trees

Sway to a song of moonland. I will

try it.

[*She sings and dances a witching*

measure.

SONG

(*To an air by HENRY LAWES, published in 1652*)

THE flowers that in thy garden rise,
Fade and are gone when Summer flies,
And as their sweets by time decay,
So shall thy hopes be cast away.

The Sun that gilds the creeping moss
Stayeth not Earth's eternal loss :
He is the lord of all that live,
Yet there is life he cannot give.

The stir of Morning's eager breath—
Beautiful Eve's impassioned death—
Thou lovest these, thou lovest well,
Yet of the Night thou canst not tell.

In every land thy feet may tread,
Time like a veil is round thy head :
Only the land thou seek'st with me
Never hath been nor yet shall be.

It is not far, it is not near,
Name it hath none that Earth can hear ;

But there thy Soul shall build again
Memories long destroyed of men,
And Joy thereby shall like a river
Wander from deep to deep for ever.

*[When she has finished the child
runs into her arms.]*

FLORA. Your spell has won her, and
I marvel not :

She was but half our own.

[To the Child] Farewell, dear child,
'Tis time to part, you with this lovely lady
To dance in silver halls, and gather stars
And be the dream you are : while we
return

To the old toil and harvest of the Earth.
Farewell ! and farewell all !

ALL.

Farewell ! farewell !

[Exeunt omnes.]

THE CICALAS : AN IDYLL

Scene : AN ENGLISH GARDEN BY STARLIGHT

Persons : A LADY AND A POET

THE POET

DIMLY I see your face : I hear your breath
Sigh faintly, as a flower might sigh in
death :

And when you whisper, you but stir the
air

With a soft hush like summer's own despair.

THE LADY (*aloud*)

O Night divine, O Darkness ever blest,
Give to our old sad Earth eternal rest.
Since from her heart all beauty ebbs away,
Let her no more endure the shame of
day.

THE POET

A thousand ages have not made less bright
The stars that in this fountain shine
to-night :

Your eyes in shadow still betray the gleam
That every son of man desires in dream.

THE LADY

Yes, hearts will burn when all the stars
are cold ;

And Beauty lingers—but her tale is told :
Mankind has left her for a game of toys,
And fleets the golden hour with speed
and noise.

THE POET

Think you the human heart no longer
feels

Because it loves the swift delight of
wheels?

90 THE CICALAS: AN IDYLL

And is not Change our one true guide on
earth,
The surest hand that leads us from our
birth?

THE LADY

Change were not always loss, if we could
keep
Beneath all change a clear and windless
deep :
But more and more the tides that through
us roll
Disturb the very sea-bed of the soul.

THE POET

The foam of transient passions cannot fret
The sea-bed of the race, profounder yet :
And there, where Greece and her founda-
tions are,
Lies Beauty, built below the tide of war.

THE CICALAS : AN IDYLL 91

THE LADY

So—to the desert, once in fifty years—
Some poor mad poet sings, and no one
hears :

But what belated race, in what far clime,
Keeps even a legend of Arcadian time ?

THE POET

Not ours perhaps : a nation still so young,
So late in Rome's deserted orchard sprung,
Bears not as yet, but strikes a hopeful
root

Till the soil yield its old Hesperian fruit.

THE LADY

Is not the hour gone by ? The mystic
strain,

Degenerate once, may never spring again.
What long-forsaken gods shall we invoke
To grant such increase to our common
oak ?

THE POET

Yet may the ilex, of more ancient birth,
More deeply planted in that genial earth,
From her Italian wildwood even now
Revert, and bear once more the golden
bough.

THE LADY

A poet's dream was never yet less great
Because it issued through the ivory gate!
Show me one leaf from that old wood
divine,
And I perchance might take your hopes
for mine.

THE POET

May Venus bend me to no harder task!
For, Pan be praised! I hold the gift you
ask.
The leaf, the legend, that your wish fulfils,
To-day he brought me from the Umbrian
hills.

THE LADY

Your young Italian—yes! I saw you stand
And point his path across our well-
walled land:

A sculptor's model, but alas! no god:
These narrow fields the goat-foot never
trod!

THE POET

Yet from his eyes the mirth a moment
glanced
To which the streams of old Arcadia
danced;
And on his tongue still lay the childish
lore
Of that lost world for which you hope
no more.

THE LADY

Tell me!—from where I watched I saw
his face,
And his hands moving with a rustic grace,

94 THE CICALAS: AN IDYLL

Caught too the alien sweetness of his
speech,
But sound alone, not sense, my ears
could reach.

THE POET

He asked if we in England ever heard
The tiny beasts, half insect and half bird,
That neither eat nor sleep, but die
content
When they in endless song their strength
have spent.

THE LADY

Cicalas! how the name enchants me
back
To the grey olives and the dust-white
track!
Was there a story then?—I have forgot,
Or else by chance my Umbrians told it
not,

THE POET

Lover of music, you at least should know
That these were men, in ages long ago,—
Ere music was,—and then the Muses
came,
And love of song took hold on them like
flame.

THE LADY

Yes, I remember now the voice that
speaks—
Most living still of all the deathless
Greeks—
Yet tell me—how they died divinely
mad,
And of the Muses what reward they had.

THE POET

They are reborn on earth, and from the
first
They know not sleep, they hunger not
nor thirst:

96 THE CICALAS: AN IDYLL

Summer with glad Cicala's song they fill,
Then die, and go to haunt the Muses'
Hill.

THE LADY

They are reborn indeed! and rightly
you
The far-heard echo of their music knew!
Pray now to Pan, since you too, it would
seem,
Were there with Phædrus, by Ilissus'
stream.

THE POET

Belovèd Pan, and all ye gods whose
grace
For ever haunts our short life's resting-
place,
Outward and inward make me one true
whole,
And grant me beauty in the inmost soul.

THE LADY

And thou O Night, O starry Queen of
Air,

Remember not my blind and faithless
prayer!

Let me too live, let me too sing again,
Since Beauty wanders still the ways of
men.

EPISTLE

TO COLONEL FRANCIS EDWARD YOUNGHUSBAND
ACROSS the Western World, the Arabian
Sea,
The Hundred Kingdoms and the Rivers
Three,
Beyond the rampart of Himálayan snows,
And up the road that only Rumour
knows,
Unchecked, old friend, from Devon to
Thibet,
Friendship and Memory dog your foot-
steps yet.

Let not the scornful ask me what avails
So small a pack to follow mighty trails:
Long since I saw what difference must be
Between a stream like you, a ditch like me.

This drains a garden and a homely field
Which scarce at times a living current
yield;

The other from the high lands of his
birth

Plunges through rocks and spurns the
pastoral earth,

Then settling silent to his deeper course
Draws in his fellows to augment his force,
Becomes a name, and broadening as he
goes,

Gives power and purity where'er he
flows,

Till, great enough for any commerce
grown,

He links all nations while he serves his
own.

Soldier, explorer, statesman, what in truth
Have you in common with homekeeping
youth?

"Youth " comes your answer like an echo
faint ;

And youth it was that made us first
acquaint.

Do you remember when the Downs were
white

With the March dust from highways
glaring bright,

How you and I, like yachts that toss the
foam,

From Penpole Fields came stride and
stride for home?

One grimly leading, one intent to pass,
Mile after mile we measured road and
grass,

Twin silent shadows, till the hour was done,
The shadows parted and the stouter won.
Since then I know one thing beyond
appeal—

How runs from stem to stern a trim-
built keel.

Another day—but that's not mine to tell,
The man in front does not observe so well ;
Though, spite of all these five-and-twenty
years,

As clear as life our schoolday scene
appears.

The guarded course, the barriers and the
rope ;

The runners, stripped of all but shivering
hope ;

The starter's good grey head ; the sudden
hush ;

The stern white line ; the half-unconscious
rush ;

The deadly bend, the pivot of our fate ;

The rope again ; the long green level
straight ;

The lane of heads, the cheering half un-
heard,

The dying spurt, the tape, the judge's
word.

You, too, I doubt not, from your Lama's
hall
Can see the Stand above the worn old
wall,
Where then they clamoured as our race
we sped,
Where now they number our heroic dead.¹
As clear as life you, too, can hear the
sound
Of voices once for all by "lock-up"
bound,
And see the flash of eyes still nobly bright
But in the "Bigside scrimmage" lost to
sight.

Old loves, old rivalries, old happy times,
These well may move your memory and
my rhymes ;

¹ In the school quadrangle at Clifton, the site from which, upon occasion, the grand stand used to overlook the Close is now occupied by the Memorial to those Cliftonians who fell in the South African War.

These are the Past ; but there is that, my
friend,

Between us two, that has nor time nor
end.

Though wide apart the lines our fate has
traced

Since those far shadows of our boyhood
raced,

In the dim region all men must explore—
The mind's Thibet, where none has gone
before—

Rounding some shoulder of the lonely
trail

We met once more, and raised a lusty
hail.

“ Forward ! ” cried one, “ for us no beaten
track,

No city continuing, no turning back :
The past we love not for its being past,
But for its hope and ardour forward cast :

The victories of our youth we count for
gain

Only because they steeled our hearts to
pain,

And hold no longer even Clifton great
Save as she schooled our wills to serve
the State.

Nay, England's self, whose thousand-year-
old name

Burns in our blood like ever-smouldering
flame,

Whose Titan shoulders as the world are
wide

And her great pulses like the Ocean tide,
Lives but to bear the hopes we shall not
see—

Dear mortal Mother of the race to be."

Thereto you answered, "Forward ! in God's
name :

I own no lesser law, no narrower claim.

A freeman's Reason well might think it
scorn

To toil for those who may be never born,
But for some Cause not wholly out of
ken,

Some all-directing Will that works with
men,

Some Universal under which may fall
The minor premiss of our effort small ;
In Whose unending purpose, though we
cease,

We find our impulse and our only peace."

So passed our greeting, till we turned once
more,

I to my desk and you to rule Indore.
To meet again—ah ! when? Yet once we
met,

And to one dawn our faces still are set.

EXETER,

Sept. 10, 1904.

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

'TIS hard to say if greater waste of time
Is seen in writing or in reading rhyme ;
But, of the two, less dangerous it appears
To tire our own than poison others' ears.
Time was, the owner of a peevish tongue,
The pebble of his wrath unheeding flung,
Saw the faint ripples touch the shore and
cease,

And in the duckpond all again was peace.
But since that Science on our eyes hath
laid

The wondrous clay from her own spittle
made,

We see the widening ripples pass beyond,
The pond becomes the world, the world
a pond,

All ether trembles when the pebble falls,
And a light word may ring in starry halls.

When first on earth the swift iambic ran
Men here and there were found but no-
where Man.

From whencesoe'er their origin they drew,
Each on its separate soil the species
grew,

And by selection, natural or not,
Evolved a fond belief in one small spot.
The Greek himself, with all his wisdom,
took

For the wide world his bright Ægean
nook,

For fatherland, a town, for public, all
Who at one time could hear the herald
bawl:

For him barbarians beyond his gate
Were lower beings, of a different date ;
He never thought on such to spend his
rhymes,

And if he did, they never read the
Times.

Now all is changed, on this side and on
that,

The Herald's learned to print and pass
the hat ;

His tone is so much raised that, far or near,
All with a sou to spend his news may hear,—
And who but, far or near, the sou affords
To learn the worst of foreigners and
lords!

So comes the Pressman's heaven on
earth, wherein

One touch of hatred proves the whole
world kin—

“Our rulers are the best, and theirs the
worst,

Our cause is always just and theirs
accurst,

Our troops are heroes, hirelings theirs or
slaves,

Our diplomats but children, theirs but
knaves,

Our Press for independence justly prized,
Theirs bought or blind, inspired or
subsidised.

For the world's progress what was ever
made

Like to our tongue, our Empire and
our trade? "

So chant the nations, till at last you'd
think

Men could no nearer howl to folly's brink ;
Yet some in England lately won renown
By howling word for word, but upside
down.

But where, you cry, could poets find a
place

(If poets we possessed) in this disgrace?
Mails will be mails, Reviews must be
reviews,

But why the Critic with the Bard con-
fuse?

Alas! Apollo, it must be confessed
Has lately gone the way of all the rest.
No more alone upon the far-off hills
With song serene the wilderness he fills,
But in the forum now his art employs
And what he lacks in knowledge gives
in noise.

At first, ere he began to feel his feet,
He begged a corner in the hindmost
sheet,

Concealed with Answers and Acrostics
lay,

And held aloof from Questions of the
Day.

But now, grown bold, he dashes to the
front,

Among the leaders bears the battle's
brunt,

Takes steel in hand, and cheaply
unafraid

Spurs a lame Pegasus on Jameson's Raid,

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM 111

Or pipes the fleet in melodrama's
tones

To ram the Damned on their Infernal
Thrones.

Sure, Scriblerus himself could scarce
have guessed

The Art of Sinking might be further
pressed :

But while these errors almost tragic
loom

The Indian Drummer has but raised a
boom.

"So well I love my country that the
man

Who serves her can but serve her on
my plan ;

Be slim, be stalky, leave your Public
Schools

To muffs like Bobs and other flannelled
fools ;

The lordliest life (since Buller made
such hay)

Is killing men two thousand yards away ;
You shoot the pheasant, but it costs
too much

And does not tend to decimate the
Dutch ;

Your duty plainly then before you
stands,

Conscription is the law for seagirt
lands ;

Prate not of freedom ! Since I learned
to shoot

I itch to use my ammunition boot."

An odd way this, we thought, to criticise—
This barrackyard "Attention ! d—— your
eyes !"

But England smiled and lightly pardoned
him,

For was he not her Mowgli and her Kim ?

But now the neighbourhood remonstrance
roars,

He's naughty still, and naughty out of
doors.

'Tis well enough that he should tell
Mamma

Her sons are tired of being what they
are,

But to give friendly bears, expecting
buns,

A paper full of stale unwholesome
Huns——

One might be led to think, from all this
work

That little master's growing quite a
Turk.

O Rudyard, Rudyard, in our hours of
ease

(Before the war) you were not hard to
please :

You loved a regiment whether fore or
aft,

You loved a subaltern, however daft,

You loved the very dregs of barrack
life,

The amorous colonel and the sergeant's
wife.

You sang the land where dawn across
the Bay

Comes up to waken queens in Mandalay,
The land where comrades sleep by Cabul
ford,

And Valour, brown or white, is Border-
lord,

The secret Jungle-life of child and beast,
And all the magic of the dreaming
East.

These, these we loved with you, and
loved still more

The Seven Seas that break on Britain's
shore,

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM 115

The winds that know her labour and
her pride,
And the Long Trail whereon our fathers
died.

In that Day's Work be sure you gained,
my friend,
If not the critic's name, at least his end;
Your song and story might have roused
a slave

To see life bodily and see it brave.
With voice so genial and so long of
reach

To your Own People you the Law could
preach,

And even now and then without offence
To Lesser Breeds expose their lack of
sense.

Return, return! and let us hear again
The ringing engines and the deep-sea
rain,

116 AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

The roaring chanty of the shore-wind's
verse,

Too bluff to bicker and too strong to
curse.

Let us again with hearts serene behold
The coastwise beacons that we knew of
old ;

So shall you guide us when the stars
are veiled,

And stand among the Lights that never
Failed.

LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS ;

OR,

THE ENGLISH BAR AND CROSS REVIEWERS

STILL must I hear?—while Austin prints
his verse

And Satan's sorrows fill Corelli's purse,
Must I not write lest haply some K.C.
To flatter Tennyson should sneer at me?
Or must the Angels of the Darker Ink
No longer tell the public what to think—
Must lectures and reviewing all be
stayed

Until they're licensed by the Board of
Trade?

Prepare for rhyme—I'll risk it—bite or
bark

I'll stop the press for neither Gosse nor
Clarke.

O sport most noble, when two cocks
engage

With equal blindness and with equal
rage!

When each, intent to pick the other's
eye,

Sees not the feathers from himself that
fly,

And, fired to scorch his rival's every
bone,

Ignores the inward heat that grills his
own;

Until self-plucked, self-spitted and self-
roast,

Each to the other serves himself on
toast.

But stay, but stay, you've pitched the
key, my Muse,

A semi-tone too low for great Re-
views;

Such penny whistling suits the cockpit's
hum,

But here's a scene deserves the biggest
drum.

Behold where high above the clamorous
town

The vast Cathedral-towers in peace look
down :

Hark to the entering crowd's incessant
tread—

They bring their homage to the mighty
dead.

Who in silk gown and fullest-bottomed wig
Approaches yonder, with emotion big?

Room for Sir Edward ! now we shall be
told

Which shrines are tin, which silver and
which gold.

Tis done ! and now by life-long habit bound
He turns to prosecute the crowd around ;

Indicts and pleads, sums up the *pro*
 and *con*,
 The verdict finds and puts the black
 cap on.

“Prisoners, attend! of Queen Victoria’s
 day
 I am the Glory, you are the Decay.
 You cannot think like Tennyson deceased,
 You do not sing like Browning in the
 least,
 Of Tennyson I sanction every word,
 Browning I cut to something like one-
 third :
 Though, mind you this, immoral he is
 not,
 Still quite two-thirds I hope will be
 forgot.
 He was to poetry a Tom Carlyle—
 And that reminds me, Thomas too was
 vile.

He wrote a life or two, but parts, I'm
sure,

Compared with other parts are very poor.

Now Dickens—most extraordinary—dealt

In fiction with what people really felt.

That proves his genius. Thackeray again

Is so unequal as to cause me pain.

And last of all, with History to conclude,

I've read Macaulay and I've heard of

Froude.

That list, with all deductions, Gentlemen,

Will show that 'now' is not the same as

'then':

If you believe the plaintiff you'll declare

That English writers are not what they

were."

Down sits Sir Edward with a glowing

breast,

And some applause is instantly sup-

pressed.

Now up the nave of that majestic church
A quick uncertain step is heard to lurch.
Who is it? no one knows; but by his
mien

He's the head verger, if he's not the
Dean.

"What fellow's this that dares to treat
us so?

This is no place for lawyers, out you
go!

He is a brawler, Sir, who here presumes
To move our laurels and arrange our
tombs.

Suppose that Meredith or Stephen said
(Or do you think those gentlemen are
dead?)

This age has borne no advocates of
rank,

Would not your face in turn be rather
blank?

Come now, I beg you, go without a fuss,
And leave these high and heavenly things
to us ;

You may perhaps be some one, at the
Bar,

But you are not in Orders, and we are."

Sir Edward turns to go, but as he wends,
One swift irrelevant retort he sends.

"Your logic and your taste I both dis-
dain,

You've quoted wrong from Jonson and
Montaigne."

The shaft goes home, and somewhere in
the rear

Birrell in smallest print is heard to cheer.

And yet—and yet—conviction's not com-
plete :

There was a time when Milton walked
the street,

And Shakespeare singing in a tavern
dark

Would not have much impressed Sir Ed-
ward Clarke.

To be alive—ay! there's the damning
thing,

For who will buy a bird that's on the
wing?

Catch, kill and stuff the creature, once
for all,

And he may yet adorn Sir Edward's hall ;
But while he's free to go his own wild
way

He's not so safe as birds of yesterday.

In fine, if I must choose—although I see
That both are wrong—Great Gosse! I'd
rather be

A critic suckled in an age outworn
Than a blind horse that starves knee-
deep in corn.

NOTE.—The foregoing parody, which first appeared in *The Monthly Review* seven years ago, was an attempt to sum up and commemorate a literary discussion of the day. On Saturday night, November 15, 1902, at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street, Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., delivered an address on "The Glory and Decay of English Literature in the Reign of Victoria." "Sir Edward Clarke, who mentioned incidentally that he lectured at the College forty years ago, said that there was a rise from the beginning of that reign to the period 1850-60, and that from the latter date there had been a very strange and lamentable decline to the end of the reign would, he thought, be amply demonstrated. A glorious galaxy of talent adorned the years 1850-60. There were two great poets, two great novelists, and two great historians. The two great poets were Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. The first named would always stand at the head of the literature of the Victorian period. There was no poet in the whole course of our history whose works were more likely to live as a complete whole than he, and there was not a line which his friends would wish to see blotted out. Robert Browning was a poet of strange inequality and of extraordinary and fantastic methods in his composition. However much one could enjoy some of his works, one could only hope that two-thirds of them would be as promptly as possible forgotten—not, however, from any moral objection to what he wrote. He was the Carlyle of poetry. By his *Lives of Schiller and Sterling*, Carlyle showed that he *could* write beautiful and pure English, but that he should descend to the style of some of his later works was a melancholy example of misdirected energy. . . . Charles Dickens was perhaps the most extraordinary genius of those who had endeavoured to deal with fiction as illustrative of the actual experiences of life. With Dickens there stood the great figure of Thackeray, who had left a great collection of books, very unequal in their quality, but containing amongst them some of the finest things ever written in the English tongue. The two great historians were Macaulay and Froude. To-day we had no great novelist. Would any one

suggest we had a poet? (Laughter.) After the year 1860 there were two great names in poetry—the two Rossettis. There had been no book produced in the last ten years which could compete with any one of the books produced from 1850 to 1860."

To this Mr. Edmund Gosse replied a week later at the Dinner of the Encyclopædia Britannica. He reminded his audience that even the most perspicuous people in past times had made the grossest blunders when they judged their own age. Let them remember the insensibility of Montaigne to the merits of all his contemporaries. In the next age and in their own country, Ben Jonson took occasion at the very moment when Shakespeare was producing his masterpieces to lament the total decay of poetry in England. We could not see the trees for the wood behind them, but we ought to be confident they were growing all the time.

Mr. Gosse also wrote to the *Times* on behalf of "the Profession" of Letters, reminding Sir Edward of the names of Swinburne and William Morris, Hardy and Stevenson, Creighton and Gardiner, and asking what would be the feelings of the learned gentleman if Meredith or Leslie Stephen (of whose existence he was perhaps unaware) should put the question in public, "Would any one suggest we have an Advocate?"

Sir Edward, in his rejoinder, had no difficulty in showing that Mr. Gosse's citation of Montaigne and Jonson was not verbally exact. Mr. Birrell added some comments which were distinguished by being printed in type of a markedly different size.

To the author of these lines, the controversy appears so typical and so likely to arise again, that he desires to record, in however slight a form, his recollection of it, and his own personal bias, which is in no degree lessened by reconsideration after seven years.

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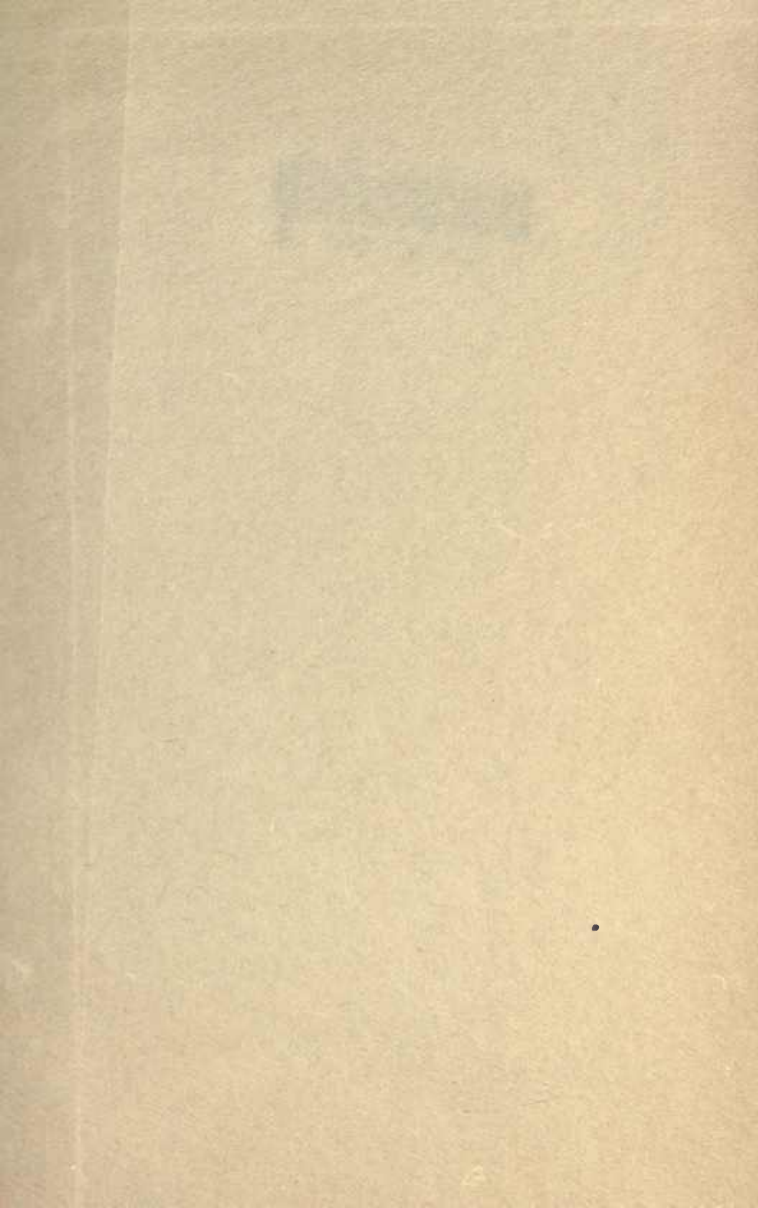
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